



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 6, 2009

Contact: Destry Henderson

202-225-2006

**McMorris Rodgers Works to Increase Access to Rural Health Care**

(Washington, D.C.) Today, Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers announced her support for new legislation that would make it easier for people across Eastern Washington to receive care from a local hospital—instead of traveling hundreds of miles away for treatment.

“When urgent medical assistance is needed, people in Eastern Washington shouldn’t have to face expensive and time consuming transfers from hospital to hospital. Unfortunately, that’s what some patients face as rural Critical Access Hospitals adjust patient occupancies to comply with federal mandates.”

In order to be classified a Critical Access Hospital, and receive cost-based reimbursement from Medicare, Critical Access Hospitals must not have more than 25 beds occupied by patients on any given day. To comply, anytime hospitals get close to the 25 bed limit, they may move patients to other hospitals farther away from family and friends. This causes stress on patients and higher costs for hospitals.

That is why McMorris Rodgers co-sponsored the Critical Access Hospital Flexibility Act (H.R. 668), introduced by Representative Greg Walden (R-OR). The legislation gives Critical Access Hospitals more flexibility in how they account for the 25-patient bed requirement. It allows Critical Access Hospitals to choose between having 25 occupied inpatient beds a day or an annual average of 20 occupied inpatient beds a day. It would also exempt beds occupied by military veterans from the inpatient bed count.

One of McMorris Rodgers’ top priorities is increasing access to quality and affordable health care. She is a member of the bipartisan Congressional Rural Health Care Coalition and is working to increase funding for rural health programs, ensuring people can receive care at rural hospitals and supporting new technologies are all crucial to improving rural health care.

Since coming to Congress, McMorris Rodgers has also worked to restore funding for critical rural health care programs like emergency devices, geriatric education centers and small hospital improvements. Preserving these programs will help ensure that Critical

Access Hospitals and Rural Health Clinics continue to be able to serve rural Eastern Washington.

**Critical Access Hospitals in Eastern Washington**

Garfield County Memorial in Pomeroy

Dayton General in Dayton

Lincoln in Davenport

Odessa Memorial in Odessa

St. Joseph's in Chewelah

Newport in Newport

East Adams Rural in Ritzville

North Valley in Tonasket

Okanogan-Douglas in Brewster

Ferry County Memorial in Republic

Mount Carmel in Colville

Whitman in Colfax

Mid-Valley in Omak

Pullman Memorial in Pullman

Tri-State Memorial in Clarkston